

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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R 271422Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8856

INFO DIA WASHDC

USDAO PARIS FRANCE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONGON ENG

FLEET NAPLES

COMSIXTHFLT

USDAO VIENNA AUSTRIA

USDAO MOSCOW SOVIET UNION

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 1409

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, YO

SUBJECT: HAPSBURG REMARKS ABOUT YUGOSLAVIA

REF: USDAO PARIS 6569 DTG 151704Z MAR 74

1. EMBASSY CONCURS IN LOW EVALUATION ARCHDUKE OTTO VON HAPSBURG'S ANALYSIS OF YUGOSLAV SCENE AS PRESENTED TO SENIOR FRENCH MILITARY (REFTEL). EITHER HE IS GROSSLY OUT OF TOUCH OR IS GIVING BIASED EXTRAPOLATION FROM FEW SELECTED FACTS.

2. WITH REGARD TO CLAIM THAT TITO WAS SERIOUSLY ILL AND ALL HIS COMMITMENTS SINCE FEBRUARY HAD BEEN CANCELLED, TITO WAS APPARENTLY ILL FOR SEVERAL DAYS IN MID-FEBRUARY AND THEREAFTER SPENT A FEW WEEKS RESTING IN HIS KARAKJORDJEVO RETREAT. BUT BY THE TIME OF HAPSBURG'S MARCH 15 PARIS LECTURE HE HAD ALREADY BEEN BACK IN
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CIRCULATION FOR A WEEK, WITH HIS ACTIVITIES PROMINENTLY MENTIONED

IN THE LOCAL PRESS. IN THE WEEK PREVIOUS TO HAPSBURG LECTURE, THESE ACTIVITIES INCLUDED PRESIDING AT A MARCH 9 MEETING OF PARTY'S EXECUTIVE BUREAU, AND FOUR HOURS WALKING IN HIS WOODS AND WINING AND DINING WITH DEPARTING SWISS AMBASSADOR, WHO REPORTED HIM TO BE IN APPARENTLY GOOD SHAPE. THE DAY BEFORE HAPSBURG'S LECTURE, HE RECEIVED THE HUNGARIAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND A FOUR-MAN ENTOURAGE AT KARADJORDJEVO. TITO'S SCHEDULE NOW IS AS FULL AS IT HAS BEEN AT ANY TIME IN PAST YEAR.

3. WHILE AGAIN ACTIVE AND ALERT, TITO SUFFERS FROM CERTAIN INFIRMITIES OF OLD AGE AND COULD, OF COURSE, DISAPPEAR FROM THE SCENE AT ANY TIME. HE WOULD BE SUCCEEDED BY THE NEW STATE PRESIDENCY, WHICH RECENT NOMINATIONS SHOW WILL BE COMPOSED OF EXPERIENCED LEADERS ENTRUSTED BY TITO WITH CONTINUITY OF HIS GENERAL POLICIES AFTER HE IS GONE. PROGNOSIS FOR SMOOTH TRANSITION IS FAIRLY GOOD.

4. WHILE LONGER-RANGE PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS OF COLLECTIVE POST-TITO LEADERSHIP ARE CERTAINLY LESS CLEAR, THERE IS NO STRONGMAN NOW VISIBLE WAITING IN THE WINGS TO MAKE HIS MOVE. WHILE GENUINELY POPULAR FIGURE COULD DEVELOP IN FUTURE, HE WOULD COME TO THE FORE ONLY WITH FULL BACKING OF PARTY AND YUGOSLAV ARMY. RANKOVIC, A FIGURE FROM THE PAST, HAS BEEN OUT OF SIGHT FOR YEARS, HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY DISCREDITED, AND FROM ALL WE CAN TELL HAS NO SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT EVEN IN SERBIA.

5. EVERYTHING ARGUES IN FAVOR OF YUGOSLAVS CONTINUING THEIR POST-1948 POLICY OF INDEPENDENCE FROM SOVIET CONTROL, INCLUDING REFUSAL TO ACCORD SOVIETS BASES. (WE ALSO BELIEVE YUGOSLAVS WOULD NOT PERMIT SOVIETS TO PLAY MAJOR ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT OF PORT FACILITIES; UNDER PRESENT, SOVIET LINE OF CREDIT, NOT YET, REALIZED, SOVIETS ARE TO BUILD DRY DOCKS IN BAY OF KOTOR AND AT KOSPER.) "CZECHOSLOVAKIAN-TYPE OPERATION" IS OUT OF THE QUESTION. SOVIETS THEMSELVES CAN HAVE NO DOUBT THAT YUGOSLAV ARMY AND ALL-PEOPLES DEFENSE FORCES (LATTER CONCEPT SPURRED BY SOVIET INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA) WOULD FIGHT HARD IN EVENT OF ATTACK/OCCUPATION.
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